

Willa Cather National Statuary Hall Selection Committee Meeting Minutes

Friday, November 19, 2021

3:00 p.m. CST

Zoom and In-Person

Dr. Don R. Gerlach Capitol View Room

1500 R Street

Lincoln, NE 68508

Chairperson Hull called the Meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. CST.

Motion for Approval of Minutes for September 21, 2021 as revised.

Motioned by Tim Heller

Seconded by Sara Crook

Roll Call Vote with Motion and Second:

Yes: Rod Bates, Sara Crook, Tim Heller, Ron Hull, Trevor Jones, Aaron Wyatt

No: 0

Not Present: None

Guests included: Ashley Olson, Ruth Haley Keene, Littleton Alston, and Katie Brossy, as well as Anne Dorsheimer, Aide to the Committee.

Status of the Willa Cather Statue: Littleton Alston

Littleton reported that there will be much to do with regard to transportation and installation of the statue. We just need to get approval and complete arrangements to coordinate bringing the John Sterling Morton statue back to Nebraska.

Chairperson Hull suggested to have an event with the statue. He attended two wonderful events over the statue for Susan La Flesche Picotte on the mall and for the Standing Bear statue. There were 200 - 300 people on the mall. He remarked that for Ashley Olson, it may be in the Foundation's best interest to want some kind of event. Most people in Nebraska will not see the statue unveiling in Washington D.C. He asked everyone to weigh in.

The Committee discussed this matter in depth. Discussion covered the challenges in moving the statue repeatedly, logistic issues, risks, costs and potential locations. Littleton noted that moving the statue was possible, but it would not be easy, as it would have to be removed and re-attached to the base every time.

The Committee also discussed pro and con arguments for unveiling the statue in advance of its placement in Washington, D.C. Ruth Haley Keene noted that the group's stance in the past has been to not show it at all before it is placed in statuary hall. Ashley Olson and Chairman Hull discussed the value of having it be seen by Nebraskans who will never be able to travel to see it in Washington, D.C. Unveiling it in Red Cloud was discussed, along with the possibility of traveling it across the state. Trevor Jones mentioned he had talked to Capitol staff as well, and that it was feasible to place it temporarily in the Capitol in Lincoln.

This prompted a discussion about the availability and practicality of casting additional statues that would remain in Nebraska. The Committee discussed this matter as well, concluding that it was feasible to do so, but that funds would need to be raised and it would not be possible to complete additional statues before the current one is installed in Washington, D.C.

Ruth Haley Keene asked Littleton provide a ballpark figure on the cost of a second statue and an idea of costs for transportation to Lincoln. Littleton confirmed that he will send numbers to Ron Hull and Trevor Jones.

Trevor reminded that the statutory charge of the committee is to install the statue in Washington D.C., and that any other casts of the statue are outside of the formal role of the committee.

Invitation List Subcommittee: Aaron Wyatt

Aaron asked if invitations will include a plus one? His subcommittee recommends including a plus one for every invitation. The second item discussed was how to prioritize groups or individuals in the distribution of invitations. He mentioned representation from UNL was needed to address a priority list.

Katie Brossy stated that the Speaker's Office will not provide an invitation list with a plus one, only individual invitations.

Chairperson Hull asked if Former First Lady Laura Bush agrees to be part of dedication, will that trigger a larger number from the House and Senate to attend and diminish space for those from Nebraska? Katie Brossy responded that the Standing Bear ceremony had only 10-15 representatives, and that historically not many show up. Ruth Haley Keene commented on the need to move quickly for adjustment. The Committee agreed to create priorities.

Aaron asked that someone from UNL be consulted about their priorities as well.

Dedication Ceremony Subcommittee: Ron Hull

If Former First Lady Laura Bush does not come, Gabrielle Union from Omaha, Nebraska is an option, but the Committee may need additional ideas. Aaron volunteered to reach out to Ms. Union on Instagram.

Sara Crook mentioned Laura Black from Nebraska Public Media as another possibility.

Regarding invitations, Katie Brossy stated that the Speaker will send invitations by email and collect RSVPs. It is important to communicate daily on RSVPs. It is tricky who to invite for the reception. If the reception holds more, than that is not a problem. There is last minute shifting and changing daily. She strongly recommended designating priorities.

Rod Bates asked if we should assume 200 people? Katie noted their space was almost the same capacity for the Standing Bear Dedication and Reception and that the largest space in the Visitor's Center holds 200.

Chairperson Hull agreed to write every participant for the dedication and provide an update. He asked Ashley Olson to contact Jim Southwick and remind him we are counting on him.

The View from Washington D.C.: Katie Brossy

The Visitor's Center will open tours at some point. They are gearing up to do tours again, but there is no date yet.

She also noted that we need to submit pictures and a letter, which has been drafted. Trevor Jones will sign the document and that will officially move us to the next stage for approval. This letter needs to be sent soon – preferably today. Trevor Jones agreed to sign it today, send Katie an electronic copy, then mail the hard copies next week.

Katie asked for a resolution from the Committee to approve the submission of the final statue to the Joint Library Committee.

Chairperson Hull entertained a motion to approve this resolution.

Motioned by Rod Bates

Seconded by Aaron Wyatt

Roll Call Vote with Motion and Second:

Yes: Rod Bates, Sara Crook, Tim Heller, Ron Hull, Trevor Jones, Aaron Wyatt

No: 0

Not Present: None

Motion passed

Motion to approve the sculpture and send letter to Architect of the U.S. Capitol.

Roll Call Vote with Motion and Second:

Motioned by Tim Heller

Seconded by Aaron Wyatt

Roll Call Vote with Motion and Second

Yes: Rod Bates, Sara Crook, Tim Heller, Ron Hull, Trevor Jones, Aaron Wyatt

No: 0

Not Present: None

Motion passed

Sara Crook mentioned that there is no report for Reception subcommittee, as they are on hold until we have a date and location.

Motion to adjourn

Motioned by Aaron Wyatt

Seconded by Sara Crook

Roll Call Vote with Motion and Second:

Yes: Rod Bates, Sara Crook, Tim Heller, Ron Hull, Trevor Jones, Aaron Wyatt

No: 0

Not Present: None
Motion passed

Adjournment at 4:03 p.m.

DRAFT